

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 IO-13 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /092 W
-----252132Z 041257 /71

R 251741Z JAN 77
FM USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2852
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 3028
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SF, ICFTU
SUBJECT: ICFTU'S "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY" WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS

REF: PRETORIA 0323

1. JOHN VANDERVEKEN, ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREETRADE UNIONS (ICFTU), SAYS THAT THE SECRETARIAT IS "VERY PLEASED" WITH THE ICFTU'S INTERNATIONAL "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY" WITH SOUTH-AFRICAN WORKERS.

2. IN COVERING EVENTS OF THE SPECIAL CAMPAIGN THAT ENDED JANUARY 21, THE MEDIA FOCUSSED THEIR ATTENTION ON EFFORTS TO BLOCK COMMUNICATIONS AND THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS TO SOUTH AFRICA, BUT THIS WAS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES PORPOSED TO NATIONAL CENTERS, VANDERVEKEN POINTS OUT.

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3. WE HAD A GOOD RESPONSE FROM OUR ORGANIZATIONS," VANDERVEKEN SAYS. "IN EVERY INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY WHERE WE HAVE AFFILIATES THERE WAS SOME KIND OF REACTION. IT WAS NEVER A WEEK OF BOYCOTT BUT A WEEK OF SOLIDARITY, AND IN THAT SENSE IT WAS A SUCCESS."

4. THE SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES WILL HAVE CONTINUING

REPERCUSSIONS, ACCORDING TO VANDERVEKEN. HE CITES AS AN EXAMPLE THE PROJECT OF THE CANADIAN LABOR CONGRESS TO RAISE MONEY (GOAL: A MILLION CANADIAN DOLLARS) TO PROMOTE FREE TRADE UNIONISM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

5. VANDERVEKEN NOTES THAT MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES MADE NO MENTION OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOR OR THE WORLD FEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (WFTU), BUT CORRECTLY ATTRIBUTED THEM TO THE INITIATIVE OF THE ICFTU. FOR VANDERVEKEN, THIS WAS A DECIDED PLUS SINCE THE WFTU HAD TRIED TO PICTURE ITSELF AS A PRIME MOVER IN THE CAMPAIGN.

6. COMMENT. THE ABOVE VIEWS, WHICH VANDERVEKEN SHARED WITH US ON JANUARY 24, ARE TO SOME EXTENT SELF-SERVING, OF COURSE, SINCE AN EVALUATION OF THE CAMPAIGN IS PARTLY AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ICFTU SECRETARIAT. SOME MORE MILITANT MEMBERS OF THE ICFTU STAFF HAD INDEED HOPED THAT TOUGHER ACTIONS, SUCH AS THOSE TRIED IN GREAT BRITAIN, WOULD BE INVOKED AGAINST THE SOUTH AFRICA REGIME, BUT ICFTU LEADERS WERE MORE REALISTIC FROM THE VERY START, AND EVEN WHILE BILLING IT AS A "WEEK OF ACTION," THEY SAW IT AS LARGELY AN EDUCATIONAL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN. HINTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BOYCOTTS, LABOR UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ECBRU00754
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770027-0449
Format: TEL
From: EC BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770122/aaaaassc.tel
Line Count: 88
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 777a9ed1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SIL
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PRETORIA 323
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3514355
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ICFTU\ 'S \ "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY" WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS
TAGS: ELAB, SF, ICFTU
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/777a9ed1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009